CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Message of President Johnson to the
Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament

Your conference has achieved singular success in negotiating the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Treaty is a major step toward a goal which the United States has been seeking since the dawn of the nuclear age. It is a triumph of sanity in international affairs and a testament to man's will to survive.

The world looks today for a beginning of the negotiations called for by the Treaty — "negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...".

This is the most pressing task which the treaty lays on its parties, and the nations meeting in Geneva today share a major responsibility in performing it. The United States takes this responsibility with the utmost seriousness.

High on the disarmament agenda of mankind is the need to halt the strategic arms race. Agreement has been reached between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States to enter in the nearest future into bilateral discussions on the limitation and the reduction of both offensive strategic nuclear weapons delivery systems and systems of defence against ballistic missiles. It is expected that the two sides will shortly reach a decision on the time and place for talks.

In the absence of agreement, the nuclear arms race could escalate to new levels. This would only result in higher and higher destructive power on each side and vast diversion of resources from peaceful pursuits - with no increase in security for anyone.

If we can make progress on limiting strategic delivery systems, the United States would be prepared to consider reductions of existing systems. By reducing these systems, we would cut back effectively - and for the first time - on the vast potentials for destruction which each side possesses.

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The United States and the Soviet Union have a special responsibility to head off a strategic arms race. The fate of mankind could well depend on the manner in which our two nations discharge that responsibility.

Progress on limiting strategic delivery systems will also facilitate the achievement of various related measures of nuclear arms control and disarmament. A number of such measures has been suggested by the United States. Additional measures have been proposed by other nations and recommended by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The United States hopes that your conference will soon be able to make significant progress on measures which have been the subject of past discussions. But these are not the only subjects of interest to the conference.

We must soon take up the question of arms limitations on the seabed in the light of the consideration being given by the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on the Seabeds to a number of proposals for arms limitations on the seabed. Your conference should begin to define those factors vital to a workable, verifiable and effective international agreement which would prevent the use of this new environment for the emplacement of weapons of mass destruction.

Meaning must soon be given to the language of the Non-Proliferation Treaty dealing with sharing potential benefits from any peaceful applications of nuclear explosions. In the view of the United States, the International Atomic Energy Agency is the "appropriate international body" through which the non-nuclear-weapon parties to the treaty may obtain these benefits under Article V of the Treaty if they choose to do so. We also believe that the IAEA is the appropriate forum for development of procedures and agreements relating to the furnishing of the peaceful nuclear explosive services obtained through the IAEA.

Finally, we must be alert to opportunities for achieving regional limitations on armaments. We have seen that co-operation at the regional level to limit armaments is not only possible but is in fact a promising path to progress. The Treaty of Tlatelolco is a worthy example of what can be achieved when neighbours collaborate in safeguarding their national security interests and in promoting their common welfare. In signing Protocol II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the United States had demonstrated its intention to respect the denuclearized status of Latin America which will be established by that Treaty. We hope that all nuclear powers will respect this great achievement of Latin American diplomacy.

We have also seen the consequences of the failure of nations to effect regional arrangements to inhibit the growth of arsenals of conventional weapons. Resources continue to be diverted from critical human needs to the acquisition of armaments and the maintenance of military establishments that in themselves feed fears and create insecurity among nations.

The United States attaches particular importance to halting non-nuclear arms races. We must achieve regional limitations on conventional armaments.

Representatives of the United States are under standing instructions to search out any initiatives for regional restraints coming from the areas concerned. If arrangements acceptable to the nations involved can be concluded, they will be respected by the United States. We stand ready to support any reasonable measure affecting the activities of the major weapons-producers that would make a regional agreement more effective, including a requirement that suppliers publicize or register their arms shipments to a particular region.